

# NEUROTICISM, MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND PEER PRESSURE AS PREDICTORS OF CYBERBULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

**Manpreet Kaur**

Assistant Professor  
Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar, Punjab, India.

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## ABSTRACT

During adolescence, the intricate web of individual traits, cognitive processes, and social dynamics intertwines to shape behavior. The adolescents who fail to cope up these upheaved emotions struggles with stress and anxiety of inclusion further leading to development of neurotic tendencies. This emotional vulnerability, when coupled with the cognitive process of moral disengagement, allows individuals to rationalize and justify their harmful actions, effectively distancing themselves from the moral consequences of cyberbullying. Moreover, peer pressure exerts a powerful influence, as individuals may feel compelled to conform to social norms within their online communities, even if it means engaging in hurtful behaviors towards others. Together, these factors form a complex nexus wherein emotional reactivity, cognitive justification, and social influence converge to foster cyberbullying behaviors. Hence, this study makes an attempt to explore neuroticism, moral disengagement and peer pressure as predictors of cyberbullying among adolescents.

For this purpose, a sample of 200 senior secondary school student including 100 boys and 100 girls were taken. NEO Five- Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992), Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura, Barbaranelli & Caprara, 1996), Peer Pressure Scale-Revised (Singh & Saini, 2016), Cyberbullying Perpetration (CBP) and Cyberbullying Victimization (CBV) Scales (Lee, Abell, & Holmes, 2015) were administered on the sample. The results of correlation analyses revealed neuroticism, moral disengagement, peer pressure and cyberbullying among adolescent students are significantly correlated with each other. Regression analysis revealed neuroticism, moral disengagement, peer pressure positively and significantly predicts cyberbullying among adolescent students.

**Keywords:** Neuroticism, Moral Disengagement, Peer Pressure, Cyberbullying

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the transitional stage between childhood and maturity. As they approach puberty, children's bodies and minds undergo several changes. These encompass problems that are social, psychological, intellectual, and physical, in addition to the formation of their own moral compass. This period of growth is marked by an increased ability to read social and emotional cues and an increased appreciation and dependence on interpersonal relationships. During this period, adolescents are also developing socially. In adolescence, the quest for identity is the most significant psycho-social development challenge. They gradually learn to navigate complex social dynamics and interpersonal relations through their interaction with others and this interaction, apart from face-to-face presence, involve them in social media platforms.

In recent years, social media has ingrained itself into our daily lives, even for young people. Internet and media device usage grew quickly after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adolescents who were alone themselves on the internet looked through social media, primarily YouTube, Instagram, and Tiktok. As people can share their opinions and sentiments anonymously on social media platform and adolescents have a yearning to stand out from the crowd, fit in, and be popular, thus making them easier target of bullying at social media platforms. In today's interconnected world, adolescents' reliance on digital communication and social media platforms to navigate their social lives has given rise to a concerning phenomenon: cyberbullying.

But now the major concern is what pushes an adolescent towards cyberbullying? During adolescence there's significant interplay of cognitive and social factors, shaping how individuals perceive themselves, others and their online interactions. Individuals failing to fit in their peer groups often experience intense negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and hostility. These individuals more likely engage in cyberbullying behaviors as a means of coping with their own insecurities and frustrations. These neurotic personalities often prioritize short-term relief from negative emotions by involving in morally disengaging behaviors. The anonymity and perceived detachment of online interactions exacerbate moral disengagement by reducing the perceived accountability or consequences of one's actions. The absence of face-to-face contact diminishes feelings of guilt or empathy, making it easier for individuals to detach from impact of their cyberbullying behavior. When these individuals observe their peers participating in cyberbullying as a common practice within social practices, they feel pressure to conform to these behavioral norms in order to maintain their social circle and avoid exclusion. Peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping individual's attitudes and behaviors by influencing perceptions of social norms, providing social validation for aggressive behavior, and reducing feelings of personal accountability. Hence, cyberbullying is greatly influenced by neurotic tendencies, moral disengagement from behaviors and influence of peer pressure.

## **CYBERBULLYING**

Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic communication to harass, intimidate, or harm others, and it has become a pervasive issue among adolescents. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying can occur 24/7, reaching victims in the supposed safety of their own homes and extending the reach and impact of the aggression. Adolescents, in particular, are vulnerable to the effects of cyberbullying due to their developmental stage and reliance on social acceptance. This period of life is marked by intense peer relationships, identity formation, and emotional volatility, making them more susceptible to the negative consequences of online harassment. Moreover, adolescents growing independence and exploration of their identities may lead them to experiment with different online personas, making them more susceptible to both perpetrating and experiencing cyberbullying. Cyberbullying perpetration refers to the act of intentionally engaging in aggressive or harmful behavior towards others using digital communication technologies whereas on the other hand, cyberbullying victimization refers to experiences of being targeted or harmed by others through online means. Cyberbullying can exploit and exacerbate vulnerabilities associated with neuroticism while simultaneously being fueled by moral disengagement mechanisms. This synthesis underscores the importance of holistic approaches to prevention and intervention that address not only the overt behaviors of cyberbullying but also the underlying psychological and ethical factors that contribute to its perpetuation. Cyberbullying, a component of cyber-abuse, encompasses online abusive interpersonal behaviors that are overly aggressive in nature (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying involves harassing, humiliating, intimidating, and/or threatening other youth through electronic mediums, including the internet, cell phones, pagers, and other wireless communication devices. The adolescents are worst victims of this menace due to their developmental stage. The stressful growing environment and malfunctioned cognitive development makes adolescents vulnerable to neurotic tendencies such as anxiety, stress and self-doubt, thus making them more prone to vent out their frustration over others anonymously.

## NEUROTICISM

Neuroticism is one of the fundamental domains of general personality included within the five-factor model or Big Five. It is also within the dimensional trait model included in Section III of the DSM-5 for emerging measures and models. This trait model consists of five broad domains, including negative affectivity (along with detachment, psychoticism, antagonism, and disinhibition). As expressed in the DSM-5, “these five broad domains are maladaptive variants of the five domains of the extensively validated and replicated personality model known as the ‘Big Five’ or Five Factor Model of personality”. The personality trait of neuroticism refers to relatively stable tendencies to respond with negative emotions to threat, frustration, or loss. Individuals in the population vary markedly on this trait, ranging from frequent and intense emotional reactions to minor challenges to little emotional reaction even in the face of significant difficulties. People with neurotic personality traits tend to perceive everyday situations as distressing or threatening. They may struggle with emotion regulation, worry excessively, and feel overwhelmed by minor frustrations.

Based on the variability of levels, the neurotic personalities are divided into: High and Low Neuroticism. An individual scoring high on neuroticism might experience emotional instability and intense emotional responses. Person may frequently experience mood swings, irritability, and sadness or worry too much. The individual with the low score on the big five trait of neuroticism tends to be less prone to becoming easily upset and exhibiting less emotional reactivity. Also, people who score high on emotional stability tend to be calm and show good self-regulation, effectively controlling their emotions.

Hence, from the above discussion it could be concluded that the exploration of neuroticism reveals a multifaceted dimension of personality that encompasses emotional instability, negative affectivity, and vulnerability to stressors. An understanding of neuroticism offers valuable insights into both the vulnerability of individuals to online harassment and their subsequent responses. High levels of Neuroticism may predispose individuals to heightened emotional reactivity, making them more susceptible to the negative effects of cyberbullying, such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Furthermore, neuroticism can exacerbate the impact of cyberbullying, leading to maladaptive coping strategies and persistent emotional distress.

## NEUROTICISM AND ADOLESCENCE

In adolescence, neuroticism plays a significant role in shaping emotional experiences, behaviors, and overall psychological well-being. This developmental period is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes, and neuroticism can influence how an adolescent navigates these transitions. High levels of neuroticism during adolescence are associated with increased vulnerability to experiencing negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and stress. These emotions can interfere with their ability to adhere to moral standards consistently. Adolescents may have difficulty in regulating their emotions, leading to impulsive or irrational behavior that could result in moral disengagement.

## **MORAL DISENGAGEMENT**

Moral disengagement refers to a set of cognitive mechanisms that decouple one's internal moral standards from one's actions, facilitating engaging in unethical behavior without feeling distress. It involves a process of cognitive re-construing or re-framing of destructive behavior as being morally acceptable without changing the behavior or the moral standards. It was initially proposed by Albert Bandura, a psychologist renowned for his work on social cognitive theory. Moral disengagement is defined as the ability to separate oneself morally from a wrong behavior by cognitively altering the perception of the situation and, therefore, not feeling negatively about it (Thornberg et al., 2015). Moral disengagement is a complex cognitive process deeply rooted in realm of social psychology. At its core moral disengagement involves individuals engaging in mental maneuvers to distance themselves from the ethical implications of their actions. This cognitive restructuring allows individuals to justify or rationalize behaviors that may otherwise can be considered immoral or unethical. These mechanisms can operate individually or in combination, allowing individuals to engage in immoral behavior while maintaining a positive self-image.

## **MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND ADOLESCENCE**

As moral disengagement refers to the cognitive processes that allow individuals to behave unethically without feeling guilt or shame. In adolescence, this can manifest in various ways, such as justifying harmful behaviors, blaming others, or minimizing the consequences of their actions. Adolescents are still developing their moral reasoning skills, making them more susceptible to moral disengagement, especially in situations where peer pressure or social norms influence their behavior. This period of development is crucial for instilling ethical values and promoting empathy and responsibility. Moral disengagement can play a significant role in how adolescents perceive and engage in harmful online behaviors. For example, they may rationalize their actions by believing that the anonymity of the internet removes accountability, or they may dehumanize their victims by viewing them as mere avatars or screen names. Additionally, adolescents may minimize the impact of their online actions by dismissing them as "just jokes" or downplaying the emotional harm inflicted on the victim. Moral disengagement can be closely intertwined with peer pressure, particularly during adolescence when social acceptance is highly valued. Adolescents may morally disengage to align their behavior with their peer group's norms or to avoid social exclusion. They may justify unethical actions by attributing them to the influence of their peers rather than taking personal responsibility. Peer refers to the group of individuals of the similar age and when a person's attitude behavior or activities are changed under the influence of peers it is called as peer pressure.

## **PEER PRESSURE**

Peer pressure is when a person or group of people influences others to do they start to follow the same behavior. When one person is changed by peer pressure, that one person might get others to change with him turning this into a domino effect where everyone starts acting or thinking a certain way due to be peer pressure. Peer pressure can significantly influence neurotic behavior and moral disengagement among adolescents. Peer pressure can exacerbate neurotic behavior by fostering a sense of social comparison and fear of rejection. Adolescents may feel pressured to conform to their peers' standards, leading to heightened anxiety and emotional distress. Additionally, peers who engage in neurotic behaviors themselves can reinforce and perpetuate these tendencies among their social group. Moreover, peer pressure can contribute to moral disengagement by creating social norms that condone or even

encourage unethical behavior. Adolescents may feel compelled to justify their actions to maintain social acceptance, leading to moral reasoning that minimizes or ignores the harm caused by their behavior. This can result in a weakening of moral principles and an increased likelihood of engaging in unethical conduct.

## **PEER PRESSURE AND ADOLESCENCE**

Adolescents may feel pressured to conform to online behaviors, including cyberbullying, to fit in with their peer group. The desire for acceptance and fear of social exclusion can drive individuals to participate in or passively support cyberbullying actions initiated by their peers. Adolescents often engage in social comparison on social media platforms, where they observe and compare themselves to their peers. This can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy or insecurity, leading some individuals to lash out or participate in cyberbullying as a way to boost their own social status or deflect attention from their own vulnerabilities.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

There are number of research studies that find direct as well as indirect connection between Cyberbullying, neurotic behavior, moral disengagement and peer pressure.

Bussey, Fitzpatrick, and Raman (2015) surveyed 456 Australian adolescents (aged 12–16) and found moral disengagement as a key predictor of cyberbullying perpetration, amplified by high self-efficacy. A meta-analysis by Geel, Goemans, and Vedder (2017) across 29 studies ( $N > 21,000$  adolescents/young adults) revealed small positive correlations between neuroticism and both cyberbullying perpetration and victimization. Ang et al. (2017) studied 396 Singaporean secondary students (aged 12–16) using the NEO-FFI; neuroticism significantly predicted perpetration due to poor emotional regulation, leading to maladaptive online responses. Wang and Yang (2020) analyzed 642 Chinese high schoolers (aged 14–17) and showed moral disengagement fully mediated the negative link between empathy and cyberbullying. Likewise, Shin, Lee, and Kim (2022) examined 514 South Korean teens (aged 13–17), confirming moral disengagement predicted cyberbullying even after controlling for empathy and gender; low empathy heightened risk. Luo and Bussey (2023) meta-analyzed 157 studies ( $N = 118,501$ ) linking moral disengagement to rule-breaking, influenced by self-efficacy, empathy, parental supervision, and peer rejection.

Prior researches examine these factors-neuroticism, moral disengagement, and peer pressure-mostly in isolation, overlooking their interplay on adolescents' cyberbullying. Neuroticism fosters emotional distress, moral disengagement justifies aggression, and peer pressure amplifies both via stress and group reinforcement. Adolescence heightens vulnerability due to identity formation and peer sensitivity. This study investigates their combined and individual effects on adolescents' cyberbullying behaviors within an integrated framework.

## **JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

During adolescence, the intricate web of individual traits, cognitive processes, and social dynamics intertwines to shape behavior. The adolescents who fail to cope up these upheaved emotions struggles with stress and anxiety of inclusion further leading to development of neurotic tendencies. Neuroticism, characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity and instability, primes individuals to react strongly to perceived threats or slights. This emotional vulnerability, when coupled with the cognitive process of moral disengagement, allows individuals to rationalize and justify their harmful actions, effectively distancing themselves from the moral consequences of cyberbullying. Moreover, peer pressure exerts a powerful influence, as individuals may feel compelled to conform to social

norms within their online communities, even if it means engaging in hurtful behaviors towards others. Together, these factors form a complex nexus wherein emotional reactivity, cognitive justification, and social influence converge to foster cyberbullying behaviors. Hence, this study makes an attempt to explore neuroticism, moral disengagement and peer pressure as predictors of cyberbullying among adolescents.

## HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypothesis are derived for the study:

1. Neuroticism, moral disengagement, peer pressure and cyberbullying will be positively and significantly related to one another.
2. Neuroticism will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.
3. Moral disengagement will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.
4. Peer pressure will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.

## METHOD AND PROCEDURE

### Method of the Study

The present study falls under the domain of descriptive research which is undoubtedly the most popular and wisely used method of research in education.

### Sample of the Study

In this particular study, a sample of 200 senior secondary school students including 100 boys and 100 girls respectively were selected from schools of Amritsar district.

### Psychological Measures Used

Following enlisted tools were used to collect the data for present study:

**The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992)** is a 60-item scale measuring five traits—Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C)—with 12 items each on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree), for ages 16+. Neuroticism scores (12–60, reverse-coded items 3,6,9,12) reflect emotional instability (higher = more anxiety/stress). Reliability: test-retest > .75. Validity: strong construct, criterion-related (e.g., job performance), convergent/discriminant.

**The Moral Disengagement Scale (Bandura, Barbaranelli, & Caprara, 1996)** comprises 32 items measuring eight mechanisms (e.g., moral justification, dehumanization) on a 3-point Likert scale (1=Disagree to 3=Agree), with total scores of 32–96 (higher scores reflect stronger justification of unethical acts). It demonstrates good test-retest reliability (.78–.81), construct validity through factor analyses, criterion-related validity for predicting rule-breaking, and convergent validity with emotional instability measures alongside discriminant validity from unrelated traits.

**The revised Peer Pressure Scale (Singh & Saini, 2016)** includes 25 positively framed items for adolescents aged 16–19, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (5=Strongly Agree to 1=Disagree), yielding total scores of 25–125 (higher = greater peer pressure). Reliability includes Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$  and test-retest (60 days) = .33, with validity confirmed via

face/content assessments and criterion methods—predictive with HIV risk/alcohol scales and concurrent with Brown et al.'s (1986) conformity scale.

**The Cyberbullying Perpetration (CBP; 20 items) and Victimization (CBV; 27 items) Scales (Lee, Abell, & Holmes, 2015)** total 47 items across verbal/written, visual/sexual, and social exclusion subtypes, using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Not at all to 5=Very often); higher averaged subscale/overall scores indicate greater involvement. Both show excellent reliability (CBP  $\alpha = .93$ ; CBV  $\alpha = .95$ ; subscales  $> .73$ ), convergent validity (CBP with Aggression Questionnaire; CBV with MPVS), and construct validity via confirmatory factor analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Co-relational analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables being examined. In this case, Pearson's product moment correlation was utilized to analyze the extent of the relationship between the variables, the dependent variables, cyberbullying was examined in relation to the independent variables, namely neuroticism, moral disengagement and peer academic pressure among adolescents. The calculated correlation coefficients are presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Showing the Coefficient of Correlation between Neuroticism, Moral Disengagement, Peer Academic Pressure, Cyberbullying and Academic Performance**

| Correlations  |             |                     |                        |
|---------------|-------------|---------------------|------------------------|
|               | Neuroticism | Moral Disengagement | Peer Academic Pressure |
| Cyberbullying | .676**      | .553**              | .581**                 |

P<0.01 level

### HYPOTHESIS – 1

**Neuroticism, moral disengagement, peer pressure and cyberbullying will be positively and significantly related to one another.**

Table 1 shows that the coefficient of correlation of neuroticism with cyberbullying is found to be .676, which is significant at 0.01 level, this further signifies that there exists a strong and positive significant correlation between neuroticism and cyberbullying. Also, the coefficient of correlation of moral disengagement with cyberbullying was calculated to be .553, which is again significant at 0.01 level, indicating there exists a strong and positive significant correlation between the variables. In addition, the coefficient of correlation of peer pressure with cyberbullying is found to be .581, which is also significant at 0.01 level, further indicating high and positive significant relationship between the variables. Hence, the hypothesis 1, is approved.

It implies that neuroticism, moral disengagement and peer academic pressure positively and significantly correlates with the cyberbullying, academic performance of the adolescents and vice- versa. A strong and positive connection between neuroticism, moral disengagement, and academic pressure from peers with cyberbullying and academic performance indicates that individuals with emotional instability, those who rationalize harmful actions, and those under peer pressure are more inclined to partake in cyberbullying and experience stress of academic performance. These characteristics and social influences play a role in both the escalation of bullying behavior and the increase in stress levels.

## REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Regression analysis is utilized to deduce causal links between the predictors and the criterion variables. In the present study, the variables under investigation are neuroticism, moral disengagement, peer pressure, and cyberbullying. So, the significant predictive power of predictor variables was found by applying regression analysis.

**Table 2: Showing the Regression Analysis of Neuroticism, Moral Disengagement, Peer Pressure and Cyberbullying**

| Variables                  | Cyberbullying |           |          |                 |          |                  |          |
|----------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|----------|------------------|----------|
|                            | <b>b</b>      | <b>SE</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>t- value</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>R- square</b> | <b>F</b> |
| <b>Neuroticism</b>         | 1.303         | 18.05     | .676     | 12.921          | .676     | .457             | 166.95   |
| <b>Moral Disengagement</b> | .767          | 20.414    | .553     | 9.344           | .553     | .306             | 87.310   |
| <b>Peer Pressure</b>       | .639          | 19.939    | .581     | 10.054          | .581     | .338             | 101.08   |

## HYPOTHESIS – 2

**Neuroticism will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.**

Neuroticism is strongly predicting cyberbullying among adolescent students as it is explaining 45% of variance in cyberbullying among adolescent students ( $F = 166.95$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Further analysis of unstandardized beta coefficient is showing positive relationship between neuroticism and cyberbullying. Moreover ( $b = 1.303$ ,  $t = 12.921$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates one unit change in neuroticism will only bring 1.30 units change in cyberbullying behaviors. Hence, the hypothesis 2 stands approved. This signifies that individuals with higher levels of emotional instability, anxiety, and sensitivity are more likely to display cyberbullying behaviors. This further implies that neurotic adolescents, who typically have difficulties with emotional regulation and exhibit heightened reactivity to stress, may utilize online platforms as a means to express their negative emotions or frustrations. Their inclination to internalize pressure and react impulsively can result in harmful interactions in online environments.

Alongside these results, additional studies also reinforce the idea that neuroticism is a positive predictor of cyberbullying in adolescents. In a study that involved 1,500 Israeli adolescents, Mesch (2009) discovered that those with high levels of neuroticism were more inclined to both perpetrate and be victims of cyberbullying, as their emotional instability and sensitivity to stress made them more engaged in online aggression. Likewise, Wang et al. (2015) identified a positive relation between neuroticism and cyberbullying perpetration in a sample of 1,500 adolescents from the U.S., indicating that neurotic individuals, due to their intense emotional responses and trouble managing stress, were more likely to partake in cyberbullying activities.

## HYPOTHESIS – 3

**Moral disengagement will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.**

Moral disengagement is significantly predicting cyberbullying among adolescent students as it is explaining 30% of variance of in cyberbullying among adolescent students ( $F = 87.310$ ,

$p < 0.01$ ). Further analysis of unstandardized beta coefficient is showing positive relationship between moral disengagement and cyberbullying. Moreover ( $b = .767$ ,  $t = 9.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates one unit change in moral disengagement will bring 0.767 units change in cyberbullying behaviors.

Hence, the hypothesis 3 is approved. The result indicates that adolescents who often engage in moral disengagement-by rationalizing harmful behavior, blaming the victims, downplaying the effects of their actions, or deflecting responsibility-are considerably more likely to take part in cyberbullying. This further suggests that these individuals can detach themselves from the moral implications of their actions, which diminishes feelings of guilt and enables them to commit online aggression without experiencing inner turmoil. These results stress the important role of moral thinking in influencing adolescents' online conduct. Likewise, Bandura et al. (2001) introduced the idea of moral disengagement, which describes how individuals rationalize unethical actions, including cyberbullying, through mechanisms such as the diffusion of responsibility and dehumanization. This concept was subsequently examined in research Kavak et al. (2019) and identified a notable positive relation between moral disengagement and cyberbullying in a sample of 1,000 Turkish adolescents, indicating that those who justified harmful behaviors were more likely to partake in cyberbullying. Zhao et al. (2017) further substantiated this idea in a study involving 2,000 Chinese adolescents, where moral disengagement was demonstrated to significantly predict online aggression. Collectively, these studies underscore that moral disengagement allows adolescents to minimize the ethical implications of their actions, thereby heightening the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying.

#### **HYPOTHESIS – 4**

##### **Peer Pressure will positively and significantly predict cyberbullying among adolescent students.**

Peer academic pressure is significantly predicting cyberbullying among adolescent students as it is explaining 33% of variance in cyberbullying among adolescent students ( $F = 101.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Further analysis of unstandardized beta coefficient is showing positive relationship between peer academic pressure and cyberbullying. Moreover ( $b = .639$ ,  $t = 10.054$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates one unit change in peer academic pressure will bring .639 units change in cyberbullying behaviors.

Hence, the hypothesis 4 is approved. The acceptance of the idea that peer pressure significantly and positively influences cyberbullying among adolescents suggests that the intense pressure young people experience from their peers may lead to a higher likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying. When students face high expectations from their peers they may feel increased levels of stress, anxiety, or frustration. These feelings can result in negative behaviors like cyberbullying, as adolescents may use them as a coping mechanism for their insecurities or to gain control over their academic surroundings. The established connection indicates that this pressure is not merely a side issue but plays a significant role in promoting negative online conduct. The results are also supported by various research studies like Yildirim et al. (2020) and Kowalski and Limber (2013) discovered that adolescents experiencing high levels of academic pressure from their peers were more inclined to partake in cyberbullying, as the stress and competition created by peer expectations led to adverse emotional consequences, which subsequently contributed to online aggression.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study implies that psychological characteristics and social influences interact meaningfully, impacting both harmful actions and achievement-driven behaviors. In particular, students with higher levels of neuroticism may be more inclined to engage in cyberbullying, potentially as a reaction to emotional instability. Likewise, adolescents who exhibit moral disengagement are more prone to participate in cyberbullying. Additionally, peer pressure seems to play in increasing participation in cyberbullying.

## IMPLICATIONS

This study examines how neuroticism, moral disengagement, and peer pressure predict adolescents' cyberbullying behaviors, offering practical value for education by informing targeted interventions. Teachers can monitor emotionally sensitive students-where neuroticism links to both better academic outcomes and cyberbullying-through training to spot anxiety signs, provide emotional support, and integrate moral reasoning/empathy exercises on online ethics. Educational leaders and stakeholders should implement anti-cyberbullying policies to counter rationalizations, promote collaborative school cultures over competition (mitigating peer pressure's dual role in boosting performance yet fueling aggression), and foster peer support networks. Students benefit from emotional intelligence programs teaching stress management, self-awareness of traits like neuroticism, and responsible online conduct to build healthier coping. Parents and community members can enhance home support via workshops on mental health, digital ethics, and open communication, ultimately aiding holistic adolescent development.

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